

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 OMB-01 IO-10 AID-05 EUR-12 /079 W

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O 091500Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY SANA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6690

P FO RUQMRA/AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE 2191

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SANA 3103

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, SA, YE

SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER ON SAUDI MEDIATION EFFORT

REF: STATE 264171

BEGIN SUMMARY: DURING NOV 9 MEETING FORMIN AL-ASNAJ DESCRIBED IN PESSIMISTIC TONES THE CURRENT PRINCE TURKI MEDIATION EFFORT HERE. AL-ASNAJ HOPED PRINCE WOULD LEAVE SOON BECAUSE LONGER HE STAYS MORE DIFFICULT IT MAKES IT FOR AL-HAMDI TO COMPROMISE WITH AL-AHMAR. MOREOVER LEFTIST ELEMENTS INCLUDING SOVIET EMBASSY ATTEMPTING TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF SITUATION. ASNAJ STILL HAD NO FULL REPORT ON RESULTS OF AL-GHASHMI VISIT TO RIYADH BUT SAID THAT INITIAL IMPRESSIONS APPEARED TO BE GOOD. I INFORMED HIM OF US EFFORTS WITH SAUDIS FOR WHICH HE EXPRESSED APPRECIATION. DESPITE GENERALLY NEGATIVE YEMENI REACTIONS, ASNAJ SAID THAT PRES HAMDI CONTINUES TO REMAIN COOL AND TO HOPE THAT SAUDIS WILL FULFILL THEIR PROMISES TO SUPPORT CENTRAL GOVT. END SUMMARY.

1. BELOW IS MEMCON OF MY NOV 9 MEETING WITH FORMIN ASNAJ WHICH LASTED FOR AN HOUR AND A HALF. DURING THIS MEETING ASNAJ BRIEFED ME IN CONSIDERABLE DETAIL ON BOTH THE CURRENT PRINCE TURKI

MEDIATION EFFORT AS WELL AS YEMENI PERCEPTIONS AND REACTIONS TO
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IT. ASNAJ EMPHASIZED THAT ESSENTIALLY THESE WERE HIS

PERSONAL VIEWS AS WELL AS THOSE OF HIS COLLEAGUE BUT NOT THOSE OF THE YEMENI GOVT OR OF PRES HAMD. HE SAID HE HAD NO OBJECTION TO MY CONVEYING THEM TO MY GOVT BUT HE DID NOT WISH THAT THEY BE PASSED TO THE SAUDIS LEST THEY MIGHT BE MISUNDERSTOOD AT THIS DELICATE JUNCTURE. I AM SUBMITTING THEM FOR DEPARTMENT AND AMEMBASSY JIDDA GENERAL BACKGROUND AGAINST WHICH TO ASSESS OUR RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH HAVE ALREADY BEEN SUBMITTED BY SEPTTEL.

2. ASNAJ SAID THAT THE PRINCE REMAINS IN YEMEN ALTHOUGH IT IS NOT CLEAR TO YARG WHAT HE IS ATTEMPTING TO ACHIEVE. ASNAJ OPINED THAT PRINCE SHOULD NOW LEAVE BECAUSE THE LONGER HE REMAINS THE MORE DIFFICULT IT WILL BE FOR HAMD. TO ARRIVE AT ANY COMPROMISE SOLUTION WITO AHMAR. ALREADY OPPOSITION AND LEFTIST ELEMENTS IN THE COUNTRY ARE TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE PRINCE'S PRESENCE TO SPREAD ANTI-REGIME AND ANTI-SAUDI PROPAGANDA IN THE COUNTRY. SINAN ABU LUHUM HAS SENT SEVERAL CABLES FROM CAIRO TO HIS BROTHER IN SANA BEMOANING THE FACT THAT THE YEMENIS ARE NOT BEING ALLOWED TO SETTLE THEIR INTERNAL PROBLEMS AND THAT FOREIGN INTERVENTION IS TAKING PLACE. AT THE SAME TIME AHMAR IS TAKING ENCOURAGEMENT FROM THE PRINCE'S PRESENCE AND IS INCREASING HIS DEMANDS. ASNAJ EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT THE PRINCE'S VISIT EVEN IF SUCCESSFUL IN ARRANGING A COMPROMISE MAY WELL SET OFF NEGATIVE AFTER-EFFECTS ENABLING OPPOSITION AND LEFTIST ELEMENTS TO CAUSE TROUBLE FOR THE GOVT AND SPECIFICALLY FOR HAMD.

3. ASNAJ SAID THAT HE RELUCTANTLY AGREED TO SEE THE PRINCE AFTER THE LATTER ASKED SEVERAL TIMES TO SEE HIM. DURING THE MEETING ASNAJ SAID THAT HE MADE IT QUITE CLEAR TO TURKI THAT HAMD. IS IN FULL CONTROL OF THE LOCAL POLITICAL SITUATION AND IS NOT PREPARED TO ACCOMMODATE AHMAR'S UNREALISTIC DEMANDS TO SHARE POWER. ASNAJ CONTINUED THAT HE TOLD TURKI THAT AHMAR'S DAH IS OVER AND THAT THE CENTRAL GOVT WILL NOT BE COERCED BY AHMAR ANY LONGER. ASNAJ SAID HE ALSO POINTED OUT TO THE PRINCE THE NEED FOR SAUDI SUPPORT OF A STRONG CENTRAL GOVT IN YEMEN AT THIS CRITICAL TIME.

4. ASNAJ CONTINUED THAT THE PRINCE'S VISIT HAS PUT THE
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YEMENI GOVT IN A DIFFICULT POSITION BECAUSE THE SAUDIS HAVE BEEN INSISTING THAT IT BE KEPT SECRET WHILE EVERYONE KNOWS HE IS HERE. AS A RESULT RUMORS ARE NOW BEGINNING TO CIRCULATE WHICH CRITICIZE THE PRINCE'S PRESENCE AS AN UNWARRANTED INTERFERENCE IN YEMENI AFFAIRS. SOME PEOPLE ARE ALREADY CALLING THE PRINCE THE SAUDI "HIGH COMMISSIONER". IN THIS CONNECTION, PRINCE TURKI'S BEHAVIOR VIS-A-VIS HAMD. HAS ALSO CAUSED RESENTMENT AS

THE PRINCE HAS BEEN USING HIS CONSUL AS A GO-BETWEEN TO INFORM THE PRESIDENT OF THE PRINCE'S DECISION TO SET UP LUNCHES WITH THE PRESIDENT AND AHMAR. THE PRESIDENT HAS ALREADY ATTENDED THREE OF THESE LUNCHES WITH NO TANGIBLE RESULTS. THE PRINCE IS NOW PUSHING FOR ANOTHER MEETING BUT THE PRESIDENT IS GETTING FED-UP AND MAY NOT AGREE.

5. ASNAJ SAID THAT A FEW DAYS AFTER THE PRINCE'S ARRIVAL AND BEFORE GHASHMI'S DEPARTURE FOR RIYADH HE WROTE A "STRONG" LETTER TO PRINCE SULTAN POINTING OUT THAT CONTINUED SAUDI SUPPORT OF AHMAR WOULD UNDO THE WORK OF THE LAST TWO YEARS WHICH BOTH THE SAUDI AND YEMENI GOVTS HAVE SO SUCCESSFULLY BEEN PURSUING. ASNAJ SAID THAT HE TOLD SULTAN THAT THE SAUDI GOVT MUST MAKE A CHOICE BETWEEN THE GOVT AND PEOPLE OF YEMEN ON THE ONE HAND AND AHMAR ON THE OTHER BECAUSE IF IT APPEARS THAT SAUDI AID IS CONDITIONAL ON SUPPORT FOR AHMAR'S UNREASONABLE DEMANDS THIS WILL ONLY PROVIDE THE LEFTIST ELEMENTS IN YEMEN WITH AMMUNITION TO ATTACK HAMDI AND THE YEMENI MODERATES WHO HAVE LONG BEEN ADVOCATING YEMENI/SAUDI RAPPROCHEMENT. ASNAJ SAID HE ALSO TOLD SULTAN THAT THE CONTINUED NON-PAYMENT OF THE SAUDI SUBSIDY AS WELL AS DELAYS IN MILITARY AID ARE BEING INTERPRETED IN YEMEN AS SAUDI EFFORTS TO INTERVENT ON BEHALF OF AHMAR. ASNAJ ASSURED SULTAN THAT NO ONE IN THE YEMENI GOVT WANTS TO ELIMINATE AHMAR FROM PLAYING A POSITIVE ROLE IN YEMENI POLITICAL ARENA BUT THAT AHMAR COULD NOT EXPECT TO BE ALLOWED TO OPERATE WHAT IN EFFECT HAS IN THE PAST BEEN A GOVT WITHIN A GOVT.

6. ASNAJ STATED THAT HE RECEIVED A TELEGRAPHIC REPLY FROM SULTAN ASSURING HIM THAT SAUDI ARABIA WILL CONTINUE ITS SUPPORT FOR THE YEMENI GOVT AND THAT THE SUBSIDY

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WILL BE PAID IN THE VERY NEAR FUTURE. SULTAN ALSO NOTED THAT DELAYS WITH REGARD TO BOTH SUBSIDIES AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE HAVE BEEN DUE TO RECENT CHANGES IN SAUDI GOVT AS WELL AS TO RAMADAN.

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DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 IO-10 OMB-01 AID-05 EUR-12 /079 W

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FM AMEMBASSY SANA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6691

INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

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7. ASHAJ SAID THAT HE WANTS TO BELIEVE THE SAUDI ASSURANCES BUT THE CONTINUED PRESENCE OF PRINCE TURKI IS CAUSING HIM TO HAVE SERIOUS DOUBTS ABOUT SAUDI INTENTIONS. HE ADDED THAT THIS VIEW IS SHARED BY MANY OTHERS IN THE YEMENI GOVT ALTHOUGH HAMDI HAS CONTINUED TO REMAIN COOL AND TO HOPE THAT THE SAUDIS WILL KEEP THEIR PROMISES. ASNAJ POINTED OUT, HOWEVER, THAT HE AND OTHERS IN THE YEMENI GOVT DO NOT UNDERSTAND WHY THE SAUDIS SEEM TO BE UNDERCUTTING HAMDI WHO HAS CLEARLY DEMONSTRATED HIS DESIRE FOR CLOSE RELATIONS WITH THE SAUDI GOVT.

8. ASNAJ NOTED THAT IT HAS BEEN IN RESPONSE TO SAUDI REQUESTS TO ELIMINATE LEFTIST AND ANTI-SAUDI POLITICAL FIGURES LIKE MUHSIN AL-AYNI AND THE ABU LUHUMS THAT HAMDI HAS PROCEEDED AGAINST THEM OVER THE LAST YEAR. MOREOVER HAMDI HAS ALSO BEEN SUPPORTING THE SAUDIS VIS-A-VIS PDRY. ASNAJ NOTED THAT IN THIS LATTER REGARD CHIEF OF STAFF AL-GHASHMI WAS IN IRAN WHEN THE IRANIAN/OMANI ATTACK WAS LAUNCHED AGAINST PDRY WHICH AFTER ALL IN YEMENI TERRITORY. ASNAJ OBSERVED THAT THIS ATTACK WAS CONDEMNED BY BOTH KUWAIT AND THE UAE. THE YARG, HOWEVER, SAID NOTHING.

9. ASNAJ OVSRVED THAT NOT ONLY THE LEFTIST ELEMENTS IN THE COUNTRY HAVE BECOME ACTIVE OVER THE LAST SEVERAL

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WEEKS BUT ALSO THAT THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR AND HIS EMBASSY HAVE BEEN TRYING TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION BY POINTING OUT THAT THE SOVIET UNION REMAINS READY AT ANY TIME TO BE RESPONSIVE TO YEMENI REQUESTS FOR MILITARY AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE.

10. ASNAJ WENT ON THAT CONTINUED SAUDI INDECISION AND INTERFERENCE IN YEMENI AFFAIRS WOULD NOT ONLY SERIOUSLY AFFECT SAUDIS INTERESTS IN YEMEN BUT ALSO USG INTERESTS IN THE AREA. MOREOVER YEMENIS LIKE HIMSELF AND OTHERS WHO HAVE BEEN PUSHING FOR CLOSER RELATIONS WITH SAUDI ARABIA ARE NOW RUNNING THE RISK OF BEING CHARACTERIZED AS SAUDI AGENTS STANDING IN THE WAY OF ESTABLISHMENT OF A STRONG CENTRAL GOVT IN YEMEN.

11. ASNAJ SAID THAT PRES HAMDY AND THE YEMENI GOVT FULLY APPRECIATE WHAT THE USG HAS BEEN TRYING TO DO IN TERMS OF BRINGING SAUDI ARABIA AND YEMEN TOGETHER BUT THE SAUDIS DO NOT SEEM TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE YEMENIS ALSO HAVE THEIR SELF-RESPECT AND THAT PROVIDING FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE DOES NOT GIVE THEM THE RIGHT TO INTERFERE. THIS INTERFERENCE CAN ONLY BENEFIT SAUDI ARABIA'S ENEMIES NOT ONLY IN YEMEN BUT IN THE PENINSULA AS A WHOLE BY UNDERCUTTING YEMEN'S MODERATES AND PLAYING INTO THE HANDS OF EXTREMISTS.

12. ASNAJ DID MOST OF THE TALKING ALTHOUGH I TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO INFORM HIM THAT THE DEPARTMENT HAS AUTHORIZED AMBASSADOR AKINS TO CONVEY OUR VIEWS OF THE SITUATION AS PER REFTEL. ASNAJ EXPRESSED HIS APPRECIATION FOR THIS INFORMATION AND SAID HE WOULD APPRISE PRES HAMDY. I ALSO ASKED ABOUT THE RESULTS OF CHIEF OF STAFF GHASHMI'S VISIT TO RIYADH. (GHASHMI RETURNED THE NIGHT OF NOV 8.) ASNAJ SAID AS OF OUR MEETING HE HAD NOT YET SEEN GHASHMI BUT INITIAL REPORTS ARE GOOD. HE PROMISED TO BE IN TOUCH WITH ME IN THE VERY NEAR FUTURE TO BRIEF ME ON THIS TRIP. ASNAJ ALSO SAID THAT MOHAMMAD BASINDWA HAD CALLED FROM RIYADH THE DAY BEFORE (NOVEMBER 8) AND HAD STATED THAT "EVERYTHING IS FINE" BUT GAVE NO DETAILS. ASNAJ SAID HE HOPED THIS "UNFORTUNATE" CRISIS IN SAUDI/YEMENI RELATIONS WOULD BE QUICKLY RESOLVED BUT REITERATED HIS VIEW THAT THE CONTINUED PRESENCE OF

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PRINCE TURKI IS NOT HELPING AND HE HOPED THE PRINCE WILL LEAVE VERY SHORTLY.

13. COMMENT: I HAVE NEVER SEEN AL-ASNAJ SO GLOOMY AND PESSIMISTIC. HE IS OBVIOUSLY CONCERNED THAT HIS EFFORTS OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS FOR CLOSER SAUDI/YEMENI COOPERATION MAY BE COMING TO NAUGHT AND THAT HE AND THE OTHER MODERATES ON THE YEMENI POLITICAL SCENE MAY FIND THEMSELVES DISCREDITED AS A RESULT OF WHAT IS BELIEVED HERE TO BE THE SAUDI INABILITY OR UNWILLINGNESS TO DISCARD THE TRADITIONAL POLICY OF DIVIDE AND RULE IN YEMEN. ASNAJ ADMITTED, HOWEVER, THAT HE HAD BEEN

SPEAKING AS A FRIEND AND, THEREFORE, WAS ALLOWING HIMSELF TO BE MORE EMOTIONAL WITH ME THAN HE WOULD WITH ANYONE ELSE INCLUDING CERTAINLY THE SAUDIS. MAKING ALLOWANCES FOR HIS EMOTIONALISM, ASNAJ'S VIEW THAT THE SAUDIS APPARENTLY STILL DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE POLITICAL DYNAMICS HERE IS WIDELY BELIEVED IN YEMEN. IT IS UNFORTUNATE THAT THIS LATEST UNSOLICITED SAUDI "MEDIATION EFFORT" HAS ONLY STRENGTHENED THIS BELIEF. IN CONCLUSION, I ADVISED ASNAJ OF NEED FOR YEMENIS TO CONTINUE TO KEEP COOL AND NOT TO ALLOW THIS TEMPORARY DIFFICULTY TO OBLITERATE NECESSITY FOR SAUDI/YEMENI COOPERATION OVER LONG TERM. ASNAJ THANKED ME FOR THIS ADVICE AND SAID THAT HE CERTAINLY HAD NO DESIRE TO DO ANYTHING WHICH WOULD ADVERSELY AFFECT SAUDI/YEMENI RELATIONS BUT SAUDIS WERE NOT MAKING IT EASY FOR SAUDI FRIENDS IN YEMEN.

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